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**PUBLIC STATEMENT**

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# Bangladesh must not bring back prison for speech in the Cyber Security (Amendment) Act, 2027

A draft dated November 9, 2026 would restore prison terms for defamation, “rumors,” and ridicule, and would reverse reforms made in 2025. Amnesty Freedom urges the government to withdraw those provisions before the bill reaches Parliament.

## What we know

A comparative statement dated November 9, 2026 sets the Cyber Security Act, 2026 beside a proposed Cyber Security (Amendment) Act, 2027. The draft is not final, and its wording may change. According to a research report by Musa Ibne Mannan of the Aage Bangladesh initiative, the draft would raise the maximum sentence under Section 26 (religious or communal hate speech that “creates anxiety”) from 2 to 5 years and make it non-bailable. It would add Section 26A (“rumors and disinformation,” up to 5 years) and Section 25A (cyber defamation, up to 2 years), offenses that the 2025 Ordinance had repealed. A new Section 25B would punish “belittling,” including memes and caricatures, with up to 3 years. The draft would let the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other agencies block content on grounds such as “dignity” and “apprehension” of harm, and would drop the requirement for tribunal approval within 3 days. Prior tribunal permission for an arrest under the new Section 46A would apply only to content in registered media, leaving bloggers, independent writers, and critics abroad without it. The report also notes that Section 29(3) would allow a court to cancel a media outlet’s registration or license after a conviction, and that the draft removes the National Human Rights Commission Chairman from the National Cyber Security Council. [1–3]

## Our position

Read together, these provisions would work as a blasphemy law without the name, and would put political cartoonists, journalists, bloggers, atheists, and critics of religion at risk of arrest. The UN Human Rights Committee has said that blasphemy laws are incompatible with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh has ratified, except where speech amounts to incitement to violence, hostility, or discrimination under Article 20(2). Criticism of officials and ideas, including religious ideas, must remain lawful, and the angry reaction of a crowd must never be treated as proof of an offense by the writer. [4–6]

## Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Withdraw Sections 25A, 25B, and 26A and the increased penalties under Section 26, and keep the 2025 reforms that made speech offenses bailable.
2. Limit Section 26 to speech that intentionally incites violence, hostility, or discrimination against people because of their religion or ethnicity, applying the six criteria of the Rabat Plan of Action, and remove the words “creating anxiety,” “apprehension,” “dignity,” and “image of the state.”
3. Write into the law that criticism, satire, parody, cartoons, and scholarly or historical analysis of religion and officials, and the expression of unbelief, are not offenses.

4. Keep tribunal approval within 3 days of any content block, with automatic restoration and a public register of blocked content, and do not extend blocking powers to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
5. End arrest for speech offenses, or at a minimum give every person, not only registered media, the protection of prior tribunal permission, and remove Section 29(3) and the blanket immunity in Section 52.
6. Restore the National Human Rights Commission to the National Cyber Security Council and consult journalists, civil society, and independent experts before the bill goes to Parliament.

**Supporting information**

1. Musa Ibne Mannan, How Jailing People for Speech Destroys Democracy: Bangladesh's Proposed Cyber Security (Amendment) Act, 2027 (Aage Bangladesh, November 2026), English edition
2. Musa Ibne Mannan, the same report, Bangla edition (Aage Bangladesh, November 2026)
3. Proposed Amendments to the Cyber Security Act, 2026: Comparative statement of the current Act and the proposed Cyber Security (Amendment) Act-2027 (version without comments, November 9, 2026)
4. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 34 on freedom of opinion and expression, paras. 47–48
5. United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 19 and 20
6. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rabat Plan of Action (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, appendix, 2012)

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**Note to editors:** *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is the date of issue. The draft amendment is dated November 9, 2026 and is not final, so provisions may change; later developments may not be reflected.*